



# Burlington Aging Council

## Program and Policy Scoping Rapid Assessment

- **Family Caregiving and Support**
- **Food Security**
- **Social Inclusion and Civic Engagement**
- **Racial Equity and Social Inclusion**

**Authors: Kelly Baldwin, Megan Hoke, Anna McMahon, and Elena Roig**

**PA 375 – Capstone PROJECT: Burlington Aging Council**

**Instructor: Dr. Glenn McRae**

**May 9, 2022**

# Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	3
<b>Goals</b> .....	3
<b>Methods</b> .....	3
<b>Family Caregiving &amp; Support</b> .....	4
<b>Food Security</b> .....	7
<b>Social Inclusion &amp; Civic Engagement</b> .....	9
<b>Racial Equity</b> .....	11
<b>Final Recommendations &amp; Conclusion</b> .....	13
<b>References</b> .....	14
<b>Appendix</b>	
Appendix A: Hunger Relief Organizational Chart.....	15
Appendix B: Recommendations Across All Focus Areas.....	17

# Executive Summary

## Goals

Our goal is to identify the strengths and weaknesses that exist in Burlington in four different sectors: Family Caregiving and Support, Food Security, Social Inclusion and Civic Engagement, and Racial Equity and Social Inclusion. We want to research opportunities outside of Burlington to offer holistic recommendations that the city could propose to better serve its aging population.

## Methods

Our method of gathering information surrounding our four topics was completed through a variety of strategies. We completed interviews with members of the Burlington Aging Council, as well as local community members and organizations. We researched the current opportunities that Burlington offers in these four topics to better assess what gaps exist. We read academic journals to identify strategies for implementing programs and researching in a more equitable and inclusive manner. Finally, we looked at what is offered in areas like Burlington to assist in better identifying gaps in Burlington and opportunities that could be introduced to the city. We researched the following areas:

1. Portland, Maine (and Maine at large)
2. Surrey, British Columbia
3. Ottawa, Canada
4. Asheville, North Carolina
5. Burlington, North Carolina
6. Tompkins County, New York



## Family Caregiving and Support:

There are three major gaps in family caregiving services: education, respite, and finding affordable services. Education includes providing opportunities for family caregivers to learn more about the background of the disease that their elderly loved ones have been diagnosed with. Many family caregivers do not have enough information on the disease they are caring for. This can provide challenges for medication distribution, symptom monitoring, etcetera. Respite is the time for family caregivers to take a break from caregiving to take care of themselves. Adult day centers and using at-home services are two strategies for offering respite. These can offer opportunities for elderly individuals to have social engagements, while the caregivers can take a break from caretaking. Another common challenge is affordability as many respite opportunities are quite expensive, especially when using long-term, and not always covered by Medicare and/or Medicaid.

Burlington offers a few services for family caregivers, but it struggles with offering affordable services, especially surrounding respite care. Most options for respite come with a price tag and a minimum time limit and are likely not covered by insurance. Below are some notable opportunities and options that are offered in Burlington.

1. They have the [Queen City Memory Café](#) which is a group that meets once a month to offer a social setting for people living with dementia and their support partner. However, this particular memory café has stopped running in the Burlington area.
2. There are companies like [Home Care Assistance of Greater Burlington](#), [TLC Homecare](#) and [Visiting Angels in Vermont](#) that offer at-home services. They offer a wide range of services which is great if you can afford them. These services are not covered by insurance and usually have a minimum amount of time for family caregivers to order.
3. The UVMMC sponsors a support group through [Family Caregiver Alliance](#). This organization provides some resources and a support group for family caregivers in a mostly virtual capacity.
4. For VA services, there is an outpatient clinic at the [Burlington Lakeside VA Clinic](#). This offers a van service for transportation, which can ease some of the travel burden.
5. Senior living opportunities like [Cathedral Square Senior Living](#), which is a SASH® location, with a full-time SASH coordinator and part-time wellness nurse. This assists with taking some of the responsibility off the family

caregivers and allows their loved ones to continue living relatively independently.

6. [Age Well](#) offers a transitioning service to assist with rehabilitation and avoiding readmittance into the hospital, a helpline, services for seniors who stay at home, and meals on wheels.
7. [CORE Adult Center](#) is run by the City of Burlington Parks, Recreation & Waterfront. This Adult Center has provided a rich array of nutritional, educational, health, social and recreational programs to Chittenden County residents ages 50 and over. This program offers activities that range from crafts to cooking and writing.

There are many organizations that provide a variety of alternative opportunities for respite and education. In Bryan, Texas, the [Bryan+College Station Public Library](#) has offered free programs for seniors in the past, which includes a pen pal program, book clubs, and computer classes. Although they do not offer supervision for the seniors, it provides a safe environment for the seniors to be engaged in. [Caregiver Connection](#), which is offered by the Granite VNA in New Hampshire, offers a multitude of in-person and online programs to offer caregivers educational opportunities and support groups. Programs include the Penacook Village Fund, which connects older adults with local and state resources to help them live independently in their own homes. "Powerful Tools for Caregivers" is an empowerment program for family caregivers that is six weeks long and built to assist caregivers in learning how to reduce personal stress, change negative self-talk, communicate more effectively, handle difficult feelings, and make challenging caregiving decisions. They also offer "Walk-In Wednesday" which is a two-hour long opportunity for family caregivers to ask questions to professionals in the industry.

It is also important to recognize the work of other similar cities and the services they offer to family caregivers. In Portland, Maine, the Southern Maine Agency on Aging offers an assortment of resources to help [caregivers' resources](#). These resources include caregiver self-care, resources for planning ahead, providing resources alternative living options, assisting a person with dementia, and additional useful tools and information. They also offer respite care, support groups, classes on caregiving, and the Sam L. Cohen Adult Day Center. In [Tompkins County](#), New York, which is where Ithaca is located, there are additional opportunities that provide caregiver services and Alzheimer's support. They offer a multitude of education and respite opportunities through workshops, classes, newsletters, support groups that are virtual and in-person, an Alzheimer's support unit, and Project CARE.

Ashville, North Carolina also has quite a few opportunities. [Land of Sky Regional Council](#) offers a free six-week-long course to provide important tools for caregivers,

no matter where the person they are caring for is living. They also provide information, assistance and support to family members and friends who are caring for a frail elderly person or someone with Alzheimer's disease. The NC Department of Health and Human Service also runs [Project CARE](#) (*Caregiver Alternatives to Running on Empty*). Project CARE is a delivery system that assists individuals who directly care for a family member or friend with Alzheimer's disease or related dementia (ADRD). It offers a variety of respite and education opportunities as it provides dementia-specific information to caregivers, creates respite connections through community-based services, and offers care consultations. There are more respite opportunities through [MountainCare, Inc.](#), an organization that offers adult care services to provide respite for caregivers, and [BrightStar Care](#), which offers a variety of at-home care options depending on the level of need for both the caregivers and the person they are caring for.

A final notable organization is [Seniors Helping Seniors® Asheville In-Home Care Services](#). This organization offers a large variety of care options such as overnight stays and 24-hour care, respite care, long-distance check-ins, dementia and Alzheimer's care, running errand, yardwork, housekeeping, companionship, and more.

## Recommendations:

1. Create a pamphlet full of resources for learning more about caregiving for you and your loved ones and resources to learn more about different illnesses (dementia/Alzheimer's, Parkinson, diabetes, limited mobility, etc.). This can be mailed out to Burlington residents and posted on the website.
2. Collaborate with Fletcher Free Library and other local partners to offer free senior events.
3. Offer free workshops and support groups that also include a temporary adult care option to make it more feasible for family caregivers to attend.
4. Research and determine ability to implement Project CARE in the Burlington area. (A delivery system that assists individuals who directly care for a family member or friend with Alzheimer's disease or related dementia (ADRD). It offers respite and education opportunities as it provides dementia-specific information to caregivers, creates respite connections through community-based services, and offers care consultations).



## Food Security:

Since the onset of COVID-19, food insecurity in Vermont has risen substantially, creating barriers to food access that did not exist prior to March 2020. In addition, health and safety protocols have fueled major changes in the way community food shelves and other organizations distribute food to those in need. Among older adults, mobility impairment is a contributing factor to food insecurity, as well as isolation and loneliness. For older New Americans and refugees, feelings of disconnectedness can further exacerbate language barriers, as well as beliefs and traditions that cannot be confined to predominant approaches to addressing food insecurity.

In providing this rapid assessment of food insecurity, my goal is to provide an analysis of the services available, both locally and in comparable U.S. cities, discuss findings from my research of Pablo Bose's work on refugee resettlement, provide insights from my interviews with Jane Catton and Chris Moldovan of Age Well, Nassé Salhi of Feeding Chittenden (FC), and a recipient of FC's Stay-at-Home Delivery Program. I will provide my recommendations at the end of this section.

## Findings & Analysis:

In assessing two commensurate small cities – Portland, Maine and Burlington, North Carolina -- it is evident Burlington, Vermont's resources are comparable. Both Portland and Burlington, NC provide food assistance through Meals on Wheels, the local Salvation Army, as well as community foodbanks, pantries and shelves that are housed in community centers, senior centers, schools, healthcare centers, and places of worship. The services mirror those of Burlington, VT, in terms of food boxes, deliveries, nutrition education, and social services.

I conducted three separate interviews to learn from people directly engaged with or receiving assistance from hunger relief efforts in the Burlington area. In speaking with a FC Stay-at-Home Delivery recipient who lives on a fixed income of \$800 a month, I learned that she does her best to support other people who live in her building, while also managing physical disabilities that include visual impairment and arthritis. She said that she was recently diagnosed with lung cancer, hoped to live independently without the aid of a nurse, and that the deliveries from FC helped her maintain a sense of autonomy.

During my interview with Jane and Chris, they discussed how Age Well is providing specialized diets and delivering food in a therapeutic manner. Similarly, Nassé Salhi of FC described a need to provide food that accommodates each recipient's needs, including washing and pre-cutting fresh produce for recipients who do not have the motor abilities to do so. Salhi's role goes beyond being the Stay-at-Home Delivery Coordinator, as she tries to visit with recipients, while helping to put food in their pantry or refrigerator. She discussed one instance where she contacted a local internet provider to reconnect the recipient's internet access, and she will often clean or tidy up a recipient's kitchen during her visit.

In terms of services for older New Americans and refugees, Jane and Chris discussed efforts to integrate culturally relevant food into their Community Meals & Restaurant Ticket Program, stating that many Nepali & Bhutanese families would not accept food from an outside source. Feeding Chittenden has begun distributing culturally relevant foods like halal meats, beans, and rice that were identified via working groups organized to better understand the needs of food insecure New Americans and refugees. One key takeaway from speaking with the Stay-at-Home recipient is that many older adults want to maintain their independence, and programs like the ones offered at Age Well and FC are essential to maintaining that independence. Having the ability to prepare food themselves or have their families do so is a way of asserting independence and expressing cultural heritage.

An assessment of Burlington's current programs reveals there is a wide variety of programming available to support older adults and people with disabilities. It also surfaces that there is at least an appearance of a duplication of services. Hunger Councils throughout the state meet monthly to discuss strategies for improving services to alleviate hunger. These meetings, along with the plethora of organizations and initiatives in the Burlington area, can provide an impetus for increased communications amongst groups to better serve older populations, including refugees, New Americans, Veterans, and people with disabilities.

I will continue to provide updates to Jane and Chris on FC's efforts to pilot an online market and provide more culturally relevant food throughout the Champlain Valley Region. Increased communication between both organizations will help lessen the confusion about the services provided and could offer the potential for cross-collaboration to increase the quality of programming.

Finally, in reading an excerpt from Pablo Bose's "Refugees in New Destinations and Small Cities: Resettlement in Vermont," he discusses "the challenges of learning English, the sense of eldercare as a burden, and the desire for a communal space" amongst refugee seniors (2020, p. 231). This further illustrates the need for translation services for websites, brochures, and interpretation services for referrals

and on-site consultations. As the community becomes more acclimated to existing with COVID-19, there is hope of a return to more opportunities to connect, share meals, and congregate in-person.

## Recommendations:

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to hunger and food insecurity. Older adults and people with disabilities have a variety of needs which, given the number of resources available, should provide more opportunities for collaboration to better support this population amidst the myriad of roadblocks that prevent people from having access to healthy, nutritious food on regular basis.

Given these findings, the following recommendations are offered:

1. Elevate the visibility of programs like Meals on Wheels and the Stay-at-Home Delivery program. Create an outreach campaign to increase awareness of and enrollment in 3SquaresVT and other programs that alleviate hunger.
2. Look to convene stakeholders across different language and cultural groups to support translation services for New American and refugee populations with the goal of increasing the availability and types of culturally relevant foods.
3. Increase advocacy efforts to protect programs like Vermonters Feeding Vermonters and 3SquaresVT.

~~~~~



## Social Inclusion and Civic Engagement:

The topic of ensuring adequate social inclusion opportunities and encouraging civic engagement among older adults is a broad topic, as each component can look different and mean different things depending on the needs and background of each individual. Thus, the approach taken in this particular section of the rapid assessment was to compile several existing programs in Burlington and link them with analogous programs in other cities and states; each program from outside Burlington will serve as a model or offer direction for opportunities to expand upon the existing Burlington programming. This approach was taken with the hope that it will encourage collaboration among organizations and expand or improve upon programs without the burden of having to develop and launch entirely new programming.

The Burlington area has a number of “companionship” programs offered by different organizations that seek to pair older adults in the community with a volunteer in order to help maintain the senior participant’s connection to the community, provide an opportunity for socialization, and in many cases also help the older adult maintain independence. Some programs are fairly fluid while some are more structured or only target a specific aspect of the older adult’s life. Programs like [Grand Friends](#) through the University of Vermont Larner College of Medicine’s Center on Aging is one of the more fluid programs—older adults are paired with students that study aging and the pairs meet periodically to discuss their life’s experiences. A similarly fluid program is the [Senior Companion Program](#) offered through AmeriCorps and the Central Vermont Council on Aging. A more targeted program is [Neighbor Rides](#) through United Way in which volunteers use their own vehicles to help seniors get around to necessary appointments as well as leisure activities.

Though these programs have their differences, they ultimately share very similar goals. An overlap in this type of programming is not a detriment, but there is opportunity for these organizations to partner together for a more collaborative approach and to identify and fill gaps in service. This partnership could be modeled after the Surrey Intercultural [Senior Social Inclusion Partnership](#) (SISSIP) out of Surrey, British Columbia. SISSIP is made up of six local organizations that collaboratively developed a set of objectives and subsequently implemented an environmental scan of services available and engaged the community through focus groups, interviews, and Neighbourhood Advisory Committees with an emphasis on diversity in order to identify gaps and barriers to service. With those gaps and barriers in mind, the partner organizations set forth to develop ten new initiatives/programs in the next five years. One of their initiatives, [Senior Centre Without Walls](#), aims to provide social opportunities for seniors in the community through telephone-based and virtual programming (in addition to offering technology literacy classes).

The model of SISSIP could be beneficial to implement in Burlington among organizations that may have overlaps in service as outlined above. The opportunity for organizations with similar missions and philosophies to approach the needs of the community collaboratively could serve to more efficiently engage the older adult community with a streamlined, well-informed series of initiatives and outreach. This type of collaborative assessment of gaps and barriers has the potential to be especially relevant now as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to present ongoing challenges in terms of health and safety as well as isolation

Another opportunity available in the Burlington area is the [Retired Senior Volunteer Program](#) (RSVP) via AmeriCorps and sponsored by United Way of Northwestern Vermont. RSVP pairs older adults with volunteer service opportunities in their community, which touches on both social inclusion as well as civic engagement.

RSVP shares some goals and philosophies with [Encore Senior Leadership Corps](#), a statewide program in Maine that trains older Mainers to not just be volunteers, but to be volunteer leaders. Similar in many ways to RSVP, Encore goes one step further and gives older adults the opportunity to use their passions and extensive life experiences to be community leaders while also offering some opportunity for personal development. One notable special initiative through Encore, in partnership with the University of Maine, was called [Boomer Reporting Corps](#) (BRC). BRC was a year-long program that offered specialized mentorship opportunities and workshops to train older adults to be citizen journalists. The program also offered connections to local media groups. BRC was intended to engage older adults in Maine's rural communities but could easily be adapted to a small city like Burlington, particularly given the wealth of local media outlets in the area and statewide. BRC, like RSVP, engages older adults both socially through workshops as well as civically by enabling participants to research and write about topics in their communities that they feel passionate and excited about. BRC also indirectly offers the added benefit of making the community at large more aware of the perspectives, concerns, and feelings of the older adult community through their publication in local news media. The model and layout of BRC is relatively versatile and could see equal success in Burlington as it did in Maine.

### Recommendations:

1. Establish/encourage partnership and collaboration with UVM Center on Aging
2. Explore possibility of specialized training programs like Boomer Reporting Corps
3. Encourage partnerships between organizations that have overlaps in programming to establish collaborative, targeted programming approach

~~~~~



### Racial Equity:

The City of Burlington is making great strides at ensuring that its services and materials are culturally appropriate and accessible to all individuals of the community however it appears that there are areas for improvement when it comes to the 65+ community with regard to increasing access, engagement, especially for its BIPOC community members. In an effort to broaden the understanding of what type of policies and programs would be relevant to consider in Burlington we conducted a

literature review to identify best practices in this area along with other successful programs and methods that can be incorporated into other programs and implemented in Burlington.

A study in the city of Ottawa (Brooks-Cleator, et al, 2019) focusing on the needs of Indigenous individuals over the age of 55 found the following areas needed improvement for this community to feel as if it was supported to age well:

1. Increased access to community gathering spaces,
2. Indigenous specific health support services,
3. increased awareness of social support programs,
4. transportation, and access to the location of Indigenous centers

Across all areas, the translation of materials and information was noted as a major need especially in health care support services and general awareness of programs. Opportunities to congregate and receive culturally appropriate services is tied to the location of Indigenous centers in the community and the ability to get to them. The study determined that most individuals found that it was either too difficult to navigate the public transportation system or that the public transportation system did not provide service to the Indigenous centers at all, making them inaccessible to the majority of the community.

As a result of this study the following recommendations were made for municipal governments that can be implemented or improved upon by the City of Burlington.

1. Increased engagement with specific community groups to gain a better understanding of the unique needs of each community prior to implementing programs.
2. Encourage and or mandate cultural safety training for all government staff.
3. Ensure the translation of all program documents and materials into various languages to help improve transparency of programs and improve overall accessibility.

One way that the city can go about improving its efforts to improve racial equity and social inclusion in its programs is through Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR). The CBPR model focuses on incorporating community members in all aspects of policy research, development and design (Heinzmann et al, 2019). Within the CBPR framework it is critical to have expertise from project staff who possess knowledge of the community's history, values, and culture. CBPR accomplishes this by working with existing members of a specific organization or by hiring members of the community to be part of project recruitment and delivery of services programs.

## Conclusion:

**To address the intersectionality across all aspects of this assessment, we propose, along with conducting an annual senior needs assessment, the following recommendations to target enduring inequities that exist for older adults in Burlington:**

1. Look for ways to convene stakeholders across different language & cultural groups. Gathering information from people with lived experience who are directly affected by these inequities is key, including the most marginalized groups of seniors: Veterans, BIPOC communities, people with disabilities, New Americans, the LGTQIA community, senior caregivers, and more.
2. Encouraging partnerships between existing organizations to foster collaborative, targeted approaches will help address issues that may lack support or a strong foundation.
  - a. For example, a collaboration between Age Well and Feeding Chittenden to address racial equity through working groups to continue to gain insight into the foods that older New Americans, refugees, and members of the BIPOC community would like to receive, to increase culturally relevant grocery and meal deliveries.
  - b. Additionally, partnerships between organizations can more effectively assess the needs, wants, and barriers that the older adult community faces to social inclusion and civic engagement as seen with SISSIP's design. Encouraging partnerships with the University of Vermont Larner College of Medicine's Center on Aging could serve as a jumping-off point for many organizations looking to collaborate and better serve the community.
3. Initiate intergenerational conversations so that older and younger generations can learn from one another. For example, fostering opportunities for MPA graduate students from the University of Vermont to be matched with Burlington seniors as part of their community engagement work can provide students with beneficial knowledge, while gaining firsthand experience in the areas of senior caregiving, racial equity, food security, and social inclusion.
4. Promote aging in place. Advocate for continued funding of the Housing Recovery Plan to ensure permanent supportive housing for older adults experiencing homelessness.

By involving community members directly, programs are more likely to be culturally appropriate and meet the needs of the community. Evidence of successful CBPR work in Burlington can be found in the efforts to ensure equitable access to pandemic resources such as masks, testing, and vaccination services, and through efforts to provide culturally appropriate foods such as Hallal meats. Burlington has made great strides over the past two years to ensure that information and materials are translated appropriately and made available and accessible to all community members. The city should continue to make efforts to ensure that racial equity is a main theme and consideration in the design and implementation of all programs moving forward. CBPR can be used as a method to ensure that programs addressing food security, family & caregiving supports, and social inclusion and civic engagement incorporate the needs and cultural values of individual communities.

### References:

[A Taste of Home: Nonprofits Deliver Culturally-Appropriate Food to Afghan Refugees](#). [Video file]. (2022, March 9).

Bose, P. S. (2020). *Refugees in New Destinations and Small Cities: Resettlement in Vermont*. Palgrave Macmillan

Brooks-Cleator, L. A., Giles, A. R., & Flaherty, M. (2019, January 19). Community-level factors that contribute to First Nations and Inuit older adults feeling supported to age well in a Canadian city. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 48, 50-59. doi:10.1016/j.jaging.2019.01.001

Heinzmann, J., Simonson, A., & Kenyon, D. (2019). A transdisciplinary approach is essential to community-based research with American Indian populations. *American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health Research*, 26(2), 15-41. doi:10.5820/aian.2602.2019.15

Rorai, V. O., Perry, T. E., Whitney, S. E., Gianfermi, H. C., Mitchell, J. A., Key, K. D., Lichtenberg, P. A., Taylor, R. J., Ilardo, J. L., Knurek, S. M., & Conyers, C. S. (2021). "It takes some Empathy, Sympathy, and Listening": Telephone outreach to older Detroiters in a pandemic as a modality to gain an understanding of challenges and resiliency. *Journal of Urban Health*, 98(S2), 91–102. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11524-021-00564-9>

### Appendix A: Hunger Relief Organizational Chart

	<b>Burlington, VT</b>	<b>Portland, ME</b>	<b>Burlington, NC</b>
Community Resource Guide	<a href="#">Aging in Vermont 2020 Resource Guide &amp; Directory</a>	<a href="#">AARP Age-Friendly Resource Guide</a>	<a href="#">Community Resource Assistance Guide Alamance County, NC</a>  <a href="#">Alamance Eldercare</a> – provides resources to older adults
Food Shelves/Pantries	<a href="#">1 Foodbank</a>	<a href="#">6 food pantries in the county</a>	<a href="#">8 organizations</a> offering food & meals
Deliveries	<a href="#">Meals on Wheels</a>  <a href="#">Stay at Home Program</a> through Feeding Chittenden	<a href="#">Meals on Wheels</a>  Local food shelves/pantries	<a href="#">Meals on Wheels</a>  Local food shelves/pantries
Community Centers	<a href="#">Heineberg Community Senior Center</a>  <a href="#">Pathways Vermont</a>  <a href="#">O.N.E. Community Center</a>	<a href="#">East End Community Center</a>  <a href="#">Peaks Island Community Center</a>  <a href="#">Reiche Community Center</a>	<a href="#">Healing Station Community Center</a>

	<a href="#">Robert Miller Community &amp; Recreation Center</a>  <a href="#">Sara Holbrook Community Center</a>	<a href="#">Riverton Community Center</a>	
Other	<a href="#">Age Well</a>  <a href="#">Hunger Free Vermont</a>  <a href="#">Crop Cash through NOFA VT</a>	<a href="#">Maine Senior FarmShare</a> – free produce for eligible seniors	<a href="#">Cares NC Program</a>  <a href="#">Alamance County Health Department</a> –  Outreach & health education

## Appendix B: Recommendations Across All Focus Areas

### Establishing ongoing support for older adults in Burlington

In addition to conducting an annual senior needs assessment, we propose the following recommendations:

